

TRAINING Disciples to Train

Session 7: Obedience (4a)

Offered by Ron Lively, M.Div., M.A. – BiblicalMentoring.org (Studies)

Step 1: Opening prayer

Step 2: Each person quotes the memory verse: VERSE: **John 14:15**

15 If you love me, you will keep my commandments.

Step 3: Read and discuss all or part of the Bible Chapter – **John 14**

Step 4: Questions for Personal Applications and/or Group Discussions:

1. Why do you think the author chose Obedience as the first of the four distinctives of a disciple?
2. Why is it important to see immediate action as the disciples offered when asked to follow Jesus?
3. Think about the difference between a motivation of fear and a motivation of love. Are you driven more by fear or by love?
4. Does your study of God's Word help to clarify the will or expectations of God?
5. Have you found some guiding principles for key decisions you have had to make?

Step 5: Read and discuss the Content from the book:

Chapter 4a per the author – Keith Phillips:

Obedience is the first distinctive of a disciple. We obey God because He is the sovereign Lord of the universe and our obedience is the only acceptable response to His unspeakable kindness (Romans 2:4).

Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15). Only those who obey God's Word demonstrate their love for Him. Your love for Christ caused you to obey His command to repent and follow Him. Your baptism, which graphically confirmed your self-death and the enthronement of Christ as the Lord of your life, was a further step of obedience (Romans 6:3,4). And the Christian life is a continuing pilgrimage of obedience.

Several years ago, I visited a military base. I was impressed by the obedience that the enlisted men displayed toward their sergeant. When he told them to run, they ran. When he told them to clean the toilets, they scrubbed. There was no debate, no hesitancy—only immediate action.

The enlisted men obeyed their sergeant because he obeyed the lieutenant, who, via the chain of command, obeyed the general. Had the enlisted men refused to obey the sergeant, they would have defied the general's authority and been subject to severe consequences. Their continued well-being depended upon their obedience.

I realized that in the military the motivation for obedience is often fear, while the Christian's motivation is love. Nevertheless, the military example illustrates an important principle for believers: our welfare is a direct result of our obedience.

We are empowered to consistently obey God through our knowledge of Scripture and our surrendered will.

You Must Know God's Word

"Blessed ...are those who hear the word of God and obey it" (Luke 11:28 NIV). It is audacious to believe that you might possibly obey God without first knowing His will.

It is unfair to punish a child for not doing what you want if you never tell him what you expect. God, however, is not unreasonable. He has clearly revealed His will for us through His Word. Therefore, we must study the Bible (2 Timothy 2:15), understanding that it trains us in righteousness and teaches us how to live in a manner that is pleasing to God (2 Timothy 3:16).

The Bible does reveal God's will. But, as most of us know, Bible study is hard work. To glean its truth, we must study the Word diligently, rather than just leisurely browse through it. Many Christians remain biblically illiterate and deprive themselves of spiritual sustenance, motivation and blessing because they are too lazy to study God's Word.

A few years ago, I became convicted about being overweight and out of shape. So, I made a commitment before God and to my family that I would run every day. I knew jogging would improve my health. At first, it was pure misery. There was seldom a day that I wanted to run. I could always think of countless reasons why I should skip braving that cold or wet morning— just for one day. But by will, I forced myself to keep this commitment.

Then I started to lose weight and to feel better. And the running became easier. Eventually, I lost forty-five pounds! I must admit that I still fight running; my emotions still rationalize that I can put it off until tomorrow. But I know better, and to this day I continue to jog.

I have found many parallels between studying God's Word and running. The most difficult part of each activity is to begin. But once I start, I really enjoy both. And when I'm through, I am pleased that I have done them. I am better off for the effort. In each discipline my emotions offer several reasons why I "legitimately" could put it off just one day. However, if I miss one day, it becomes easier to justify my procrastination the next. When I do them regularly, my strength builds and they become less difficult. The discipline wills to study God's Word.

Jesus said, "...If you abide in My word [that is, continue daily], then you are truly disciples of Mine" (John 8:31). Consuming God's Word must be a priority in the disciple's life so "that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:17). You must always be "ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you..." (1 Peter 3:15).

The experiences of biblical characters are recorded as examples for your instruction (1 Corinthians 10:11). You must continually discover scriptural principles and apply them to your life (Psalms 119:7,8).

I am convinced that there is a guiding principle or a direct command in God's Word for every decision I need to make. So if I do not know God's will in a particular situation, more than likely it is because I do not know God's Word.

When someone seeks my advice regarding an important decision, my first questions are: "Have you studied the Word? Have you listened to God Himself?" I am amazed by people who ask my counsel before they seek God's. We need the counsel of godly people who know both us and the Bible well, but this should follow our study of applicable biblical principles and prayer.

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Source: The Making of a Disciple by Dr. Keith Philips. Pub. by Fleming H. Revell Company, 1981. ISBN 0-8007-1181-5. Introduction by Robert E. Coleman. Content (except study questions) is taken from the book without revisions.

Step 6: *Share personal prayer requests then each person prays for the other's requests.*

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